

# Lucky Jim Study Guide

## Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis

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## Plot Summary

Lucky Jim is one of the first novels by award winning writer, Kingsley Amis. In Lucky Jim, the protagonist is a young man who is fighting to keep a job he dislikes by attempting to charm a Professor he finds equally unpleasant. During his fight to keep his job, James Dixon falls in love with the girlfriend of his professor's son. It occurs to Dixon that he might not be doing himself any favors by courting this young woman, especially since he already has a girl he believes to be his girlfriend, but he discovers he cannot help himself. Soon Dixon finds he is unable to end the fight even as it leads him to sure dismissal. In the end the good guy does come in first. Lucky Jim is a humorous book that shows what a little persistence and honesty can achieve, even for the most common people in the world.

James Dixon goes to tea with his professor, a situation that brings him face to face with a girlfriend who has recently attempted suicide. Dixon is nervous about this meeting, but discovers that Margaret is more in control of her mental facilities than he had imagined she would be. Together they discuss the Welchs, the family of Dixon's professor and holder of his future. Dixon has agreed to attend an art weekend at the Welch home in hopes of scoring a few points with the professor as he finishes his first of two years probation with the local university. Dixon is sure the art weekend will be boring, but with some help from Margaret, hopes to be able to fake his way through the weekend successfully.

The weekend begins well. Dixon is able to hide the fact that he cannot read music in a group sing-a-long that ends just as Dixon is about to face a situation in which he cannot fake his way out. Dixon watches as the professor's son is introduced to the guests along with his girlfriend. Dixon skips this introduction in order to avoid the pompous son as long as possible. However, this decision leads to a disaster when Dixon mistakes the girl with the son as a ballet dancer he was told the son was dating. This leads to a fight that ends when Dixon escapes from the home to the pub down the street.

Dixon sneaks back into the house hours later, drunk and unable to control his passions for Margaret. Margaret rebuffs Dixon, sending him in search for more alcohol. When Dixon wakes the next morning from his drink induced slumber, he discovers that he fell asleep with a cigarette in his hand that burned a hole in the bed sheets as well as a table and a rug. Dixon is desperate to hide what he has done. Out of desperation, Dixon confides in Bertrand, the son's, girlfriend. Christine agrees to help him. They remake the bed and hide the table in a storage room, hoping this will hide the mistake long enough for Dixon to come up with a good excuse.

A few days later, Dixon takes a call meant for the professor and discovers that Christine is desperate to find Bertrand in order to arrange for him to meet her uncle, an art patron whom Bertrand would like to get a job with. Dixon discovers Bertrand is staying with his parents through a phone call in which he pretends to be a reporter from a newspaper wanting to interview Bertrand. Later, at a dance at the university, Dixon watches as Bertrand fawns all over Christine's uncle. Carol, the wife of a fellow history lecturer,



takes Dixon to dance and confesses to him that she has been having an affair with Bertrand and is angry that Bertrand tossed her over for Christine. Dixon thinks he could use this news to lure Christine away from Bertrand, but decides not to.

Dixon offers Christine a ride home when she becomes unhappy at Bertrand's treatment of her. At the Welch home, Christine and Dixon confess that they admire one another and agree to meet for tea. Before their appointed meeting, Dixon attempts to end his relationship with Margaret, but becomes concerned about the impact of this on her and decides to rekindle the flame. At their meeting, Christine explains that she cannot end her relationship with Bertrand and that perhaps it would be best if they did not see one another again. A few days later, Dixon gives a scheduled lecture, but he is so drunk that he messes up. The following day, Christine's uncle offers Dixon the job that Bertrand wanted. At the same time, Dixon learns that Christine has learned of Bertrand's affair with Carol and left him. They decide to rekindle their love affair just as they both make plans to go to London.



# Chapters 1-3

## Chapters 1-3 Summary

James Dixon is a young lecturer at a university and is reaching the end of his first year of a two-year probation period. Dixon dislikes his teaching job, but wants to keep the job for the security and the higher level of respect it earns him in comparison to other jobs he would qualify for.

In Chapter 1, James Dixon is speaking with his professor about music, Welch's passion. Dixon pretends interest because he needs to stay on Welch's good side in order to survive the rest of his two-year probation with the university. Dixon asks about Margaret, a fellow lecturer who has been staying with the Welch's since a stay in the hospital following a suicide attempt following a failed romance. Dixon is to have tea with the Welch's, forcing him to see Margaret for the first time since she left the hospital, a fact that makes him nervous as to her emotional state. On the drive to his home, Welch asks Dixon about an article he wrote on shipbuilding techniques. Welch would like to see the article published so he can use it in arguing for Dixon's continue employment and Dixon tells him he has sent it to a new journal with hopes of publication. Dixon hated writing the article almost as much as he hates lecturing on Medieval History. Shortly before arriving at his home, Welch asks Dixon if he will consider giving a lecture for College Open Week for the visiting guests and dignitaries. Dixon agrees despite his distaste for the subject, Merrie England.

In Chapter 2, Dixon and Margaret have drinks at a pub down the street from the Welch home. Margaret talks openly about her attempted suicide without much emotion, discussing it almost like it was trivial event. Margaret thanks Dixon for giving her space and not asking her too often how she felt, like so many other people had been doing. Margaret then tells Dixon what to expect at the art weekend Welch has asked him to attend. Dixon is horrified to learn he will be expected to sing and play music on a recorder, but figures it will all be worth it when he is offered a permanent job with the university. Margaret also tells Dixon that Welch's son, Bertrand, will be in attendance. Bertrand, a painter, will most likely be bringing along his fiancé, a ballet dancer named Sonia Loosmore.

In Chapter 3, Dixon runs into a student, Mr. Michie, who wants to discuss a special subject Welch has asked him to prepare and discuss with students. Dixon wants the three prettiest girls to join the course, not Mr. Michie, but must put up with Mr. Michie's interest because he is dating one of these pretty girls. Dixon extracts himself from this discussion and returns to the boarding house where he lives with several other gentlemen. There, Dixon finds a letter announcing that the new journal has agreed to publish his paper. In his excitement, Dixon draws on the catalogue another boarder has received. Afterward, Dixon asks a friend and fellow boarder, Mr. Atkinson, to call him at Welch's on Sunday and tell whomever answers that his parents have come to visit unexpectedly and he must return home. Dixon then rushes off to catch the bus so that



he will not be forced to ride to the Welch's with Johns, a fellow lecturer and boarding house boarder Dixon does not like.

## Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Several important characters are introduced in these early chapters as well as the situations that will propel the plot. Dixon is introduced as he speaks with his professor, an unpleasant, forgetful man whom Dixon clearly does not like. Dixon is nice to this man, listening somewhat intensely even though he dislikes the subject being discussed. The reader soon learns that this man holds Dixon's future in his hands, the decision whether Dixon will be offered a permanent job with the university or not. Soon the reader also learns that Dixon dislikes his job almost as much as his boss, but wants to keep it because of the security it means and the prestige as compared to other jobs he might be qualified for, such as teaching at lesser schools. Dixon is determined to keep his job, even when it means attending an art weekend that is sure to leave him bored and unhappy.

Margaret is also introduced in these early chapters. Margaret is a woman who has recently attempted suicide. However, the reader will notice long before Dixon that Margaret does not behave like a woman who was depressed enough to take her own life, suggesting there is something more to Margaret's behavior than meets the eye. Mr. Michie is also introduced, a student who fought in the military during the war and is now at the university on a government grant. This not only speaks to the setting of the novel, but it also introduces a new type of university student. Dixon dislikes this young man, seemingly because he is a good student who is deeply interested in the subject Dixon both teaches and loathes. Finally, the reader is briefly introduced to Johns, a fellow lecturer and boarder to Dixon. Johns is a quiet, dark man whom Dixon clearly does not like, but it is unclear at this point how Johns feels about Dixon.



# Chapters 4-5

## Chapters 4-5 Summary

In Chapter 4, Dixon has been pretending to sing throughout a sing-a-long because he cannot read music. However, Welch has just chosen a song in which Dixon will be forced to reveal his lies because it includes a solo part. Johns begins to laugh. However, just as Dixon is about to be found out, Bertrand, Welch's son, walks in, disrupting the sing-a-long. Already put off by Bertrand's apparent conceit, Dixon melts back out of the crowd and avoids introductions. This proves to be a mistake later when Dixon is pulled into a conversation with Bertrand and his girlfriend and Dixon refers to the girlfriend as a ballerina and learns she is not the fiancée, Sonia Loosmore, but another young woman by the name of Christine Callaghan. When Dixon attempts to apologize, Bertrand humiliates him by pointing out that he would not have made the mistake if he had not missed the introductions. Dixon is left to stand alone.

Margaret rescues Dixon and they enter a conversation with Carol Goldsmith, the wife of another lecturer, who comes to Bertrand's defense. Bertrand comes back into the conversation and Dixon learns that he had come to the weekend in the hopes of meeting an art patron, Mr. Julius Gore-Urquhart, but learned at the last minute Mr. Gore-Urquhart was in France for a month or more. Bertrand, a painter, wants to get a job with Gore-Urquhart as his secretary and feels he has a very good chance. It also turns out that Christine is Gore-Urquhart's niece. Dixon and Bertrand begin discussing the rich and their habit of benefiting only people in their own class. Dixon offends Bertrand by suggesting the rich should benefit the poor rather than their own, a fact Bertrand not only finds wrong, but offensive. An argument ensues in which Christine becomes involved in some sort of attempt to defend her boyfriend, ending only when Dixon decides to leave the house.

In Chapter 5, Dixon returns to the house after everyone appears to have gone to bed. Dixon walks round the house and sees Bertrand hug Carol Goldsmith, causing him to wonder about the nature of their relationship. Dixon then sneaks into the house and attempts to make it to his bedroom without being seen because he is drunk. However, the room where Dixon is staying can only be entered through a large bathroom and the bathroom is currently in use. Margaret invites Dixon into her bedroom. A quiet conversation quickly turns into a make out session. When the kisses go too far, Margaret kicks Dixon out of her room. Dixon goes downstairs and finds some more liquor. Now very drunk, Dixon puts himself to bed where he discovers that he is so drunk that he cannot lie flat. Dixon lies sitting up and finally manages to fall asleep.

## Chapters 4-5 Analysis

Dixon attends the art weekend at Welch's house and thinks he can fake his way through a sing-a-long, but discovers he is wrong. However, just as Dixon is about to be found



out, Welch's son Bertrand causes a disruption to the festivities, touching for the first time on why the author chose to call his book *Lucky Jim*. Dixon, however, proves to not be as lucky as it appears when he makes a mistake and refers to Bertrand's girlfriend by another woman's profession. Dixon skipped the introductions and did not know that Bertrand has arrived with a new girlfriend rather than the fiancée he expected. Bertrand then shows his character by belittling Dixon and suggesting he should have been at the introductions. Later, Bertrand continues to show his conceit and unpleasant attitudes when he allows Dixon's opinions to draw him into an argument. This is the beginning of a great deal of unpleasantness between these two men that will continue as the plot develops, causing the reader to worry about the influence of this battle on Dixon's ability to keep his job.

Dixon escapes the boredom and tension of the Welch home to get a few drinks at a local pub. When he returns, Dixon is drunk, but he does not miss the implied significance in an embrace between Bertrand and Carol Goldsmith. Later, Dixon attempts to make love to Margaret, assuming she had an intimate relationship with the young man she attempted to kill herself over and would welcome Dixon's advances. However, Dixon is wrong and Margaret rebuffs him, leaving him looking for more alcohol to drown his passions. Again the reader worries about Dixon's chances of retaining his job when he steals liquor from his clearly puritanical boss. Going to sleep drunk, the reader can only wonder if some disaster will not await Dixon when he awakes in the morning.





# Chapters 6-9

## Chapters 6-9 Summary

In Chapter 6, Dixon wakes only to discover that he fell asleep with a cigarette burning. The cigarette burned large holes in the bedclothes and then rolled onto a table, then rolled across the floor to burn a hole in a rug. Dixon panics and takes a razor to the bedclothes and the rug, cutting away the burn marks, hoping to disguise what he has done. Dixon then goes down to breakfast only to begin worrying about the damage. Dixon finds himself confessing to Christine, Bertrand's girlfriend, even though he felt she added to the trouble he had with Bertrand the previous night. Christine agrees to help and goes with Dixon to his room. Together they remake the bed to make it appear that Dixon tore the sheets in the grip of a nightmare. Christine then agrees to stand watch as Dixon hides the table in a storeroom.

In Chapter 7, Margaret comes out of her room just as Dixon attempts to sneak down the hallway with the table. Dixon confesses everything to Margaret who can only seem to focus on Christine's role in the whole episode. Dixon then waits in his room until Atkinson calls, and then he promptly leaves the Welch home.

In Chapter 8, Dixon is called into Welch's office a few days later. Instead of discussing bed sheets, Welch wants Dixon to find out exactly when his article will be published. Dixon attempts to get Welch to tell him what his standing at the university is, but Welch refuses to make any predictions. Afterward, Dixon runs into Margaret in the common room. Dixon finds Margaret angry and argumentative, so he asks her to go to the University Dance with him. Margaret quickly agrees. In chapter 9, Dixon is still in the common room when a porter comes looking for Professor Welch. Dixon agrees to take the phone call for Welch who has not come into work that day. Dixon is pleased to discover the phone call is from Christine looking for help in finding Bertrand.

Christine has heard from her uncle and learned that he would be willing to go to the University dance that weekend. However, Christine has no idea where Bertrand is or that he has promised to take Carol to the dance. To help her, Dixon calls the Welch home pretending to be a reporter from a London newspaper looking for Bertrand. Dixon pulls the rouse off, proving that Bertrand is staying with his parents. Dixon calls Christine back and convinces her to play along with his story about the phone call, suggesting it was a prank played by a mutual friend of hers and Bertrand's.

## Chapters 6-9 Analysis

Dixon has made another mistake, this one appearing to be the nail in his career's coffin. Dixon has burned the private property of Professor and Mrs. Welch. Desperate to hide what he has done, Dixon cuts the holes with a razor, but this only makes matters worse. Dixon turns to an unlikely ally for help, Christine, and discovers that away from



Bertrand, Christine is really a kind, gentle person. Dixon and Christine actually get along, so Dixon does not fail to help Christine later when she calls and asks for his help in locating Bertrand. The fact that Christine does not know where Bertrand is suggests that their relationship is on the way out and gives some hope to Dixon even as he is continuing to see Margaret in a somewhat romantic situation.

At the same time, Dixon attempts to pin Professor Welch down to his chances of continuing at the university, but Welch refuses. This suggests to the reader that there is little hope of Dixon continuing with the school. Dixon is upset by this lack of commitment either way, but refuses to see it as bad news, showing the reader his continued optimism and hope that he could turn things around.



# Chapters 10-12

## Chapters 10-12 Summary

In Chapter 10, Dixon learns that Bertrand told Carol he would not escort her to the dance in front of his entire family so that she might not argue with him. Instead, Bertrand escorts Christine, and Carol is escorted by Mr. Gore-Urquhart. Dixon and Margaret join Bertrand and Carol's group in the small lounge set up at the dance. Dixon is put off by Gore-Urquhart's apparent interest in Bertrand's art. At the same time, Margaret is flirting shamelessly with Gore-Urquhart, leaving Dixon to entertain himself. Carol, too, seems quite angry and Christine is having trouble drawing her into the conversation. After a time, everyone pairs off to dance again and Dixon finds himself dancing with Christine.

In Chapter 11, Dixon and Christine discuss Bertrand as they dance. Dixon wants to know about the fall out over the phone call, concerned Christine was not able to convince Bertrand of their cover story, but she is unhappy discussing it. They return to the bar, but before Dixon can sit, Carol asks him to dance.

In Chapter 12, Carol announces that she needs someone to talk to and Dixon will do. They sit and Carol tells Dixon how she had been having an affair with Bertrand, with the full knowledge of her husband, and how Bertrand offended her by bringing Christine to this dance. Carol then tells Dixon that she can tell he likes Christine and encourages him to dump Margaret and pursue Christine openly. Dixon refuses, confessing that he believes he is not good enough for Christine. They return to the bar where Carol chooses to sit at the bar with Beesley rather than at the table with Bertrand. Bertrand upsets Christine by ignoring her and going to Carol's side. Dixon then offers to take Christine home.

## Chapters 10-12 Analysis

Dixon attends the dance with Margaret but soon finds her distracted by Christine's uncle, Mr. Gore-Urquhart. Dixon manages to dance with Christine, something that both excites and makes him nervous because he feels that Christine is too beautiful for a man such as him. Dixon has already come to the conclusion that the only kind of woman who he will ever be able to have a romantic attachment is women like Margaret even though he is more attracted to Christine than to Margaret. However, Carol can see that Dixon loves Christine and convinces him that he can have a chance with Christine if he will only give it a try.

At the same time, Dixon learns that Bertrand is an unkind man who has been cheating on Christine with Carol, a married woman. This shows the reader that Bertrand is exactly the type of man Dixon thought he was from their first meeting. It also gives a contrast to Dixon's character, showing that even when Dixon chooses to do things that are not always kind, he is essentially a good person.



# Chapters 13-15

## Chapters 13-15 Summary

In Chapter 13, Dixon waits out front of the building for the taxi he ordered and to see if Christine will take him up on his offer of a ride home. When a taxi arrives and Dixon learns it was ordered for another couple, he lies and says that it is for him. Dixon has the taxi park around the corner out of sight and continues to wait on Christine. When the couple the taxi was intended for comes out, Dixon pretends their taxi has not arrived and even attempts to hail a taxi for them. When Christine comes, Dixon tells her he will walk her home and directs her around the corner before she can say anything to expose the lie. Dixon then convinces the taxi driver to take them to the Welch residence even though it is much further than he thought he would be going that night.

In Chapter 14, Christine tells Dixon that she feels Bertrand often picks fights with her just to place her in the wrong and that she does not like the way he puts himself before everything else. Christine then asks Dixon if he thinks Christine should marry Bertrand. Dixon tells Christine that he does not because Bertrand does not make her a priority the way a man should. Christine then falls asleep for a short time before they arrive at the house. In chapter 15, Dixon walks Christine up to the house and helps her find an open window to let herself in. Once in the house, Dixon and Christine share a kiss. Dixon then convinces Christine to meet him for tea a few days from then even though she is concerned about getting out of the house without alerting Bertrand to her purpose. Dixon then leaves when they hear Welch's car approaching.

## Chapters 13-15 Analysis

Dixon takes the chance and escorts Christine home, during which they discuss Christine's relationship with Bertrand and her future, only to find themselves in a romantic embrace that leads to the promise of a date. It seems that Dixon might have succeeded in getting the girl of his dreams, but he seems to have forgotten about both Margaret and Bertrand, leaving the reader wondering if Dixon intends to pursue romance, touching on the theme of love, above all else including his job security, another theme of the novel.

At the same time, Dixon learns without a doubt that Bertrand has been having an affair with Carol Goldsmith. Dixon could use this news to help him in his romantic entanglement with Christine, but he chooses not to. This shows the reader the kind of character that Dixon has, showing that even though he seems to mess up a lot, he is essentially an honest, kind person. However, it also shows that Bertrand is not a nice person, but a man who not only is unfaithful, but who constantly puts himself before all else, including Christine.



# Chapters 16-17

## Chapters 16-17 Summary

In Chapter 16, Dixon writes a letter to Johns pretending to be a jealous boyfriend of a woman Johns admires in revenge for Johns telling Welch that he had arranged to have Atkinson call him the arty weekend so he would not have to stay the whole weekend. Dixon then turns his attention to his Merrie England lecture only to be interrupted when Margaret arrives. Margaret demands to know if Dixon dislikes her as evidenced by him leaving her at the dance. Dixon denies it, saying that she was so busy with Gore-Urquhart that he was surprised she noticed his absence. Then Dixon suggests that perhaps they stop seeing one another. Margaret goes into hysterics, screaming and crying so loudly that both Atkinson and the landlady come rushing into the room. Atkinson calms Margaret by slapping her and then feeding her some whiskey. Dixon apologizes to Margaret, but she refuses to allow him and accepts their situation.

In Chapter 17, Dixon rushes to breakfast the next morning in order to be present when Johns receives his letter. Dixon and two other boarders who know about the letter can hardly conceal their laughter until Johns warns Dixon he will regret his actions. Afterward, Dixon goes to the college where he learns the editor who is to publish his article has been offered a job at a university in Argentina. Dixon then goes to see a professor of music to get some notes for his Merrie England lecture. Afterward, Dixon goes to the library where he runs into Professor Welch. Welch asks Dixon to go to the city library to do some research in anticipation of an External Examiner's review the following day. Dixon agrees even though he has more work to do on his lecture.

## Chapters 16-17 Analysis

Dixon attempts to end his relationship with Margaret based on the fact that neither of them seems terribly interested in continuing it, but Margaret has a hysterical fit. Margaret begins to cry so hard and loud that it brings other people from the house to Dixon's room. Dixon is shocked and ashamed of himself, but is even more surprised when Margaret acts as though nothing out of the normal happened when she recovers herself. Again Margaret's behavior seems odd to the reader, suggesting something not quite right with her mental faculties.

Dixon plays a joke on a fellow boarder, but the joke does not go over well, but ends with threats. Afterward, Dixon continues to work on the lecture he is due to give, foreshadowing a major lecture that could affect his continued employ at the university. While working on this, Welch asks Dixon to do some research for him, assuming that Dixon has already finished his lecture. Dixon agrees, again attempting to do whatever it takes to make Welch happy in order to secure his job. Despite his many mistakes, Dixon clearly still wants this job.



# Chapters 18-19

## Chapters 18-19 Summary

In Chapter 18, Welch invites Dixon to dinner as reward for his research. When they reach the house, Welch parks in the garage, leaving Dixon no room to get out on his side. Dixon slides across the driver's seat only to tear his trousers on a broken spring. In the house, Dixon learns that Welch is supposed to go to a play with his family and there will be no dinner. Welch promises to take him home after changing. While he waits, Dixon is confronted by Mrs. Welch about the bedclothes. Dixon refuses to admit what happened, but agrees that he did the damage and offers to pay for it. Mrs. Welch also accuses Dixon of pretending to be a reporter and calling her son, but Dixon continues to deny that in order to protect Christine. Bertrand then warns Dixon that Christine is out of his league and he should leave her alone. Dixon agrees. Left alone with Margaret, Dixon feels bad about ending their relationship so abruptly and invites Margaret to the movies.

In Chapter 19, Dixon tries to call Christine and end their date, but Mrs. Welch refuses to believe he is calling from London, so he hangs up. Dixon then receives a phone call from Mr. Catchpole, Margaret's ex-boyfriend, asking about Margaret. When Dixon becomes upset, Mr. Catchpole asks him to meet him for tea so he can explain himself. Finally, Dixon calls the editor about his article, but is unable to get the man to give him a set date for publication. Unable to break the date respectfully, Dixon goes to meet Christine for tea. Christine immediately tells Dixon that she does not believe a romance between them would have a chance because she lives in London and he in the country. Not only that, but Christine is afraid she cannot end her relationship with Bertrand without good cause. Dixon admits that he too is afraid their relationship would not last and that he is still involved with Margaret. They end the relationship mutually and go their separate ways.

## Chapters 18-19 Analysis

Dixon is invited to the Welch home only to find himself the center of hostility and threats. Mrs. Welch wants to know what happened to her bedclothes and if Dixon has been calling the house pretending to be a reporter. However, both Dixon and the reader learn that the professor has not been informed of these missteps yet, giving the impression that one more mistake with release the damn holding back all this information and will easily result in his dismissal. At the same time, Bertrand reminds Dixon that Christine is out of his league and advises him to leave her alone. This leads Dixon to attempt to patch things up with Margaret because he does believe Christine is too good for him.

When Dixon meets Christine for tea, he intends to tell her he does not want to continue seeing her. Christine beats him to the punch, however, telling him their relationship could not survive the distance between them. It seems that if Dixon gets the job he

wants, he will lose the girl he loves. At the same time, Dixon continues to have trouble learning the publication date of his article and is invited to tea with Margaret's ex-boyfriend, the same man she attempted to commit suicide over, foreshadowing a revelation that will either cement Dixon's commitment to Margaret or end it.



# Chapters 20-25

## Chapters 20-25 Summary

In Chapter 20, Dixon is in his room finishing his Merrie England lecture when Bertrand comes to visit. Bertrand again warns Dixon to stay away from Christine. When Dixon refuses, they get into a fistfight. Bertrand gets one punch in before Dixon knocks him to the floor. The fight is over before it began. Mr. Michie comes to visit as Bertrand leaves and informs Dixon that he is the only one interested in his special subject.

In Chapter 21, Dixon drinks too many sherries at the reception before his lecture while talking with the principal and other guests. Dixon speaks briefly to Christine before Bertrand rudely drags her away to help him talk to Gore-Urquhart. When it is time to go in, Dixon goes into the bathroom where he runs into Mr. Gore-Urquhart who has come specifically to see Dixon again. They speak for a minute and Gore-Urquhart gives Dixon a drink of some whiskey he has.

In Chapter 22, Dixon is very drunk as he presents his lecture. Dixon becomes aware that he is imitating first Welch and then the principal, causing a great deal of glee for many of the students as well as disgust among the staff. Dixon changes his tone, taking on one of boredom and disgust, causing the principal to end the lecture. Dixon then faints.

In Chapter 23, Dixon learns that he will most likely be fired. Dixon also discovers that the editor who promised to publish his article had it published in a foreign language magazine under his own name. Dixon speaks to Michie who expresses disappointment that Dixon would no longer be with the university. Dixon gathers his things and returns to the boarding house where he learns he had a phone call from a strange man. Dixon returns the call only to learn it was Gore-Urquhart offering him the job Bertrand had wanted.

In Chapter 24, Dixon rushes to meet Catchpole for tea. Catchpole tells Dixon that he was never Margaret's lover and he never left town with another woman. In fact, Catchpole has an idea that Margaret's suicide attempt was only a ruse to force both himself and Dixon to prove their love for her because Margaret thrives on drama. This gives Dixon the safety to leave Margaret. When Dixon returns to the boarding house, he learns Christine called. Christine is returning to London and wants Dixon to meet her at the train station. Dixon rushes to the train station, but arrives too late.

In Chapter 25, Christine arrives at the train station under the misconception that the train does not leave until later. Dixon learns that Carol told Christine about her affair with Bertrand, allowing her to end their affair. Dixon tells Christine all his news, including the job and the truth about Margaret, allowing them to be together. They decide to go have lunch, only to run into the entire Welch family on the street. They simply walk past.





## Chapters 20-25 Analysis

The lecture Dixon is to give for College Open Week that was discussed in the first chapter has finally arrived. Dixon is unhappy about the lecture, about Margaret and Christine, about everything. This unhappiness is compounded when Bertrand comes to his rooms to threaten him for having tea with Christine. Dixon stands up for himself, refusing to back down or admit that Christine already ended the affair. This shows character on Dixon's part, shows that he is stronger willed than he has shown thus far and a deeply honest man. Dixon fights with Bertrand and wins, but is the one with the obvious bruises afterward. Dixon goes on to his lecture, nervous and drinking more than he should, especially when he sees how cruel Bertrand is to Christine. The lecture is a disaster and Dixon is fired afterward.

Everything appears to have fallen apart for Dixon. Dixon has lost the job he fought so hard to keep and has lost the girl. However, Dixon soon learns that he has a new, better job in London and that all the obstacles between he and Christine are over, assuming he can reach her before she returns to London. All seems lost until the reader is reminded of Welch's absentmindedness. Welch delivers Christine too late to the train station and Dixon is able to meet her. Finally the reader discovers that Dixon really is Lucky Jim, the one who has won all that Bertrand wanted and lost.



# Characters

## James Dixon

James Dixon is a young lecturer at a university who is just about to complete his first year of a two-year probationary period. Dixon dislikes his job and all that goes into it, including the boring, fact filled articles that he is expected to write. However, Dixon feels that a job with the university is preferable over other jobs he might be qualified for. Therefore, Dixon works hard to attempt to make a good impression on his professor despite a rough start. When he is invited to the Professor's house for what promises to be a boring weekend, Dixon agrees with enthusiasm. However, this weekend proves to be as boring as he suspected, Dixon allows himself to be drawn into a fight with the Professor's son that sets him up for more trouble.

Dixon sneaks out of the house and goes for a drink, only to return drunk and ready for trouble. Dixon sneaks into the room of his girlfriend when his own bedroom door is blocked by an architectural oddity, and attempts to make love to her. The girlfriend rebuffs him, sending Dixon in search of more alcohol. This causes Dixon to be so drunk that he falls asleep with a lit cigarette that burns terrible holes in the bed sheets as well as a table and a rug. Dixon tries to hide this damage, relying on the girlfriend of the Professor's son for help.

Dixon finds that he likes the girlfriend of the Professor's son and therefore attempts to help when he finds himself in a position to aid the young woman. This help brings the two closer together, helping them discover a passion for one another. However, they are both attached to other people and they live many miles apart, so they mutually decide to break it off. Later, though, circumstances change, and not only does Dixon get the girl, but he gets an even better job than the one he had wanted to begin with.

## Professor Ned Welch

Professor Welch is a forgetful man who seems to be the embodiment of the distracted college professor. Welch is also the head of the history department where Dixon works. Welch will be the main influence in Dixon's attempt to keep his job. Dixon therefore does all he can to please Welch, even doing research for Welch when he should be working on his own lectures. However, many of these attempts to please Welch backfire, leaving Dixon vulnerable to some of the many mistakes he often makes in social situation.

Welch loves music and often has people over to have musical weekends. Dixon attends one of these weekends and finds himself embroiled in an argument with Welch's son, Bertrand. Dixon dislikes the entire weekend and later makes up lyrics to a song Welch admires that expresses his opinion of Welch. Welch asks Dixon to present a lecture during College Open Week that Dixon does not want to give. When Dixon presents the



lecture, he is so drunk that he finds himself often making fun of Welch. This disastrous lecture ends Dixon's time at the university.

## **Mrs. Welch**

Mrs. Welch is married to Professor Welch. Mrs. Welch is a hard woman who does not let things go easily. When Mrs. Welch becomes aware that Dixon ruined some bed sheets while staying at her house, she refuses to allow Dixon to make excuses or deny that he was the cause of the damage. Eventually Dixon is forced to admit that he did ruin the sheets, but he continues to refuse to admit how it happened. Mrs. Welch, impressed with Dixon's honesty, allows him to get away with his desire not to admit the truth about the source of the damage. Mrs. Welch is a hard woman, but her decision not to force Dixon into a corner shows that she has some sense of compassion, though very little as far as Dixon is concerned.

## **Bertrand Welch**

Bertrand Welch is Professor Welch's son. Bertrand is an artist who believes he is the best painter in London. Bertrand is a pompous, self-centered young man whom Dixon dislikes from the moment they meet. When Dixon admires Bertrand's girlfriend and then mistakes her for another woman he knew Bertrand was dating, he draws Bertrand's anger. Bertrand picks a fight with Dixon and this young woman appears to encourage it. Later, however, this young woman proves to be a nice girl who is simply influenced by the people around.

Bertrand wants a job with a patron of the arts who is looking for a new secretary. When it turns out that his girlfriend is the niece of this man, Bertrand uses her to get close to the man. Dixon begins to show interest in the girl and Bertrand warns him off, telling him that he intends to marry the girl and if Dixon does not back off, he will make sure he loses his job. Dixon refuses to back off, so Bertrand attempts to fight him. Bertrand loses. However, Bertrand soon discovers that his own pompous attitude and habit of being unfaithful has caused him to ruin his relationship on his own. Not only this, but Bertrand loses his chance at the job he wanted as well.

## **Christine Callaghan**

Christine Callaghan is a young woman who works in a London bookstore. Christine also happens to be the niece of Mr. Gore-Urquhart, an art patron. Christine becomes involved with a painter, Bertrand, and through him is introduced to Dixon. Soon Christine discovers that Bertrand wants a job with her uncle and that he also wants to marry her. Christine is young and confused, unsure if she wants to remain in a relationship with a man who seems to be too self-centered to put a woman first. When Dixon begins to become interested in her, Christine reaches out to him, but then turns away, afraid of hurting Bertrand. Later, however, Christine learns that Bertrand has been



having an affair with a married woman. Christine immediately ends their relationship and reaches out once more to Dixon.

## **Margaret Peel**

Margaret Peel is a young lecturer at the same university as Dixon. Dixon and Margaret have been friends, often going to lunch and shopping with one another. Margaret was dating another young man who told her that he was running off with another young woman. In a fit of depression, Margaret attempted suicide with a bottle of pills. Later Dixon became filled with guilt because he believed if he had kept a promise to visit her that night he might have stopped her or rescued her sooner than her neighbor was able to do. Dixon began to date Margaret based on this guilt, only to find her hot and cold on an unpredictable basis. Later Dixon would learn that the suicide attempt was only a farce created to make two men, including Dixon, prove their love for her.

## **Mr. Gore-Urquhart**

Mr. Gore-Urquhart is an art patron who is greatly admired by Bertrand. Bertrand arranges through his girlfriend, Christine, to meet Mr. Gore-Urquhart, who happens to be Christine's uncle, in order to secure a job with Gore-Urquhart. Dixon is present at this meeting that takes place during a university dance and is horrified to see that it appears that Gore-Urquhart admires Bertrand's art. Later, Dixon meets Gore-Urquhart at his own lecture and is surprised to find the man quite interested in him for reasons he does not understand. When Gore-Urquhart offers the job to Dixon instead of Bertrand, not only does Dixon get the ultimate revenge on Bertrand, he gets an opportunity he has always wanted, to move to London.

## **Carol Goldsmith**

Carol Goldsmith is the wife of a fellow lecturer at the university. Dixon sees Carol and Bertrand hug one night at the Welch resident and begins to think there might be something going on between them. Later, Carol tells Dixon that she has been having an affair with Bertrand with the full knowledge of her husband. Dixon could use this information to get Christine to leave Bertrand, but chooses not to. Instead, Carol tells Christine, causing Christine to end her relationship with Bertrand and turn to Dixon.

## **Mr. Johns**

Mr. Johns is a fellow lecturer at the university in the music department. Mr. Johns also lives in the same boarding house as Dixon. For reasons Dixon does not understand, Mr. Johns goes out of his way to sabotage Dixon every time he turns around. Mr. Johns tells the Welchs that Dixon went out to drink and that he arranged to have a friend rescue him from the art weekend with a lie. Later, Mr. Johns again interferes with Dixon's business, leaving Dixon determined to get revenge.

## **Mr. Michie**

Mr. Michie is a student at the university. Mr. Michie is at the school on a scholarship from the government for his service in the military during the Second World War. Mr. Michie saw combat, something that Dixon both admires and dislikes about Mr. Michie. Dixon dislikes Mr. Michie also because he is dating one of the most beautiful girls in the school. Mr. Michie is an intelligent man who is a favorite of Professor Welch's, adding to the reasons why Dixon dislikes him. Mr. Michie is also interested in a course Dixon is designing at the request of Professor Welch. Dixon wants the three prettiest girls in the department to take the course, not Mr. Michie, but is not surprised when Mr. Michie announces that he is the only one interested in signing up for the course.



## Objects/Places

### Burned Bed Sheets

While staying with the Welchs, Dixon falls asleep holding a cigarette and causes a large burn on the bed sheets that he attempts to hide by cutting away the burned edges and turning the sheets around on the mattress.

### Burned Table

Dixon burned a bedside table when he fell asleep with a cigarette. Christine helps Dixon hide the table in a storage room.

### Merrie England Lecture

As a part of his job, Dixon is to give a Merrie England Lecture as a culmination to College Open Week at the University where he works. Dixon becomes drunk and gives a disastrous lecture that ends his job with the University.

### Special Subject

Dixon is instructed to design a special subject class for the following semester and see how many students he can interest. Dixon wants to interests a group of pretty girls, but ends up interesting only a male student he dislikes.

### Ship Building Article

Dixon submits a shipbuilding article he wrote to a new journal, hoping its publication will help him keep his job. However, the editor of the journal is noncommittal when Dixon asks when the article will be published and then Dixon learns the editor had the article published under his name in a foreign language journal.

### Johns' Magazine

Dixon defaces a magazine delivered at his boarding house for a fellow boarder. Later, Dixon believes this same boarder gets revenge by telling his professor stories about him.



## **Letter to Johns**

In revenge for telling stories about him to his professor, Dixon writes Johns a letter that is supposedly from the jealous boyfriend of a woman Johns admires. Johns knows immediately what Dixon has done and vows revenge.

## **Beer**

Dixon enjoys drinking beer and is often criticized for this habit.

## **Sleeping Pills**

Before the opening of the novel, Margaret attempts to kill herself with sleeping pills. However, Dixon later learns the entire episode was a farce intended to make two men, Dixon included, to prove their love for her.

## **Dixon's Welch Song**

Dixon makes up words to a classic song Welch admires that are unkind and represent Dixon's dislike of Welch.

## **Welch's Car**

Welch's car is a distinctive, noisy car in which its driver tends to drive recklessly. Dixon tore a pair of trousers when attempting to get out of the car through the driver's seat that had a broken spring.

## **Dixon's Faces**

Dixon often makes faces when no one is looking in order to express his emotions so that when he speaks to the person in question he will not reveal his true feelings, such as the boredom and dislike he often feels when conversing with Professor Welch.

## **University**

Dixon works in the History department of the university under Professor Welch.

## **Train Station**

Dixon meets Christine at the train station at the end of the novel and convinces her to give their relationship a second chance.

## Welch Home

Dixon meets Christine at the Welch home during a weekend arts party. Later, Dixon and Christine promise to meet for tea when Dixon drops her off at this home.



# Social Sensitivity

Throughout *Lucky Jim*, Amis is concerned with the restructuring of British society which took place after World War II. Some of the effects were intensively felt in the English education system through efforts to open educational opportunities to more members of the working and middle classes. The growth of the provincial universities and the decline of the influence of the culturally elite led to friction between the old and the new orders. In *Lucky Jim*, such cultural change leads to conflict between Jim Dixon, a young history instructor, and Professor Welch, his department chair.

Jim sees history as a means of planning and preparing for a better future; Welch sees it as a means of romanticizing and sentimentalizing the past.

Amis expands this conflict through Jim's interactions with his colleagues and acquaintances. Welch asks Jim to give a lecture titled "Merrie Olde England," a title which symbolizes the nature of the conflict. Welch tests Jim to see if he is willing to perpetuate a myth, while Jim and his fellow veterans are trying to cope with life, love and a new social order.

The conflict between Jim as representative of a new England and Welch as defender of the old one expands to include Welch's family and some of Jim's colleagues. As a weekend house guest at one of the Welches' artistic soirees, Jim displays his social and cultural shortcomings: He is faulted for being unable to carry his part in singing French madrigals. He comes to blows with the Welches' son Bertrand who is an effete, supercilious snob. He has to avoid phone calls from the punctilious Mrs. Welch because he burned her sheets while smoking in bed. He writes phony threatening letters to the meddling friend Johns, who is his fellow boarder and the College Librarian. He walks a constant tightrope in his relationship with Margaret Peel, his history department colleague who is recovering from a jilting and a supposed suicide attempt; he can neither abandon her on the premise that she is using him, nor can he accept her interest in him as only a matter of friendship. All of these conflicts arise because the egalitarian, easy-going Jim depends for his job on associations with vain and hypocritical social and cultural elitists.

## Techniques/Literary Precedents

Lucky Jim is a conventional novel; its narration is third person, its development is chronological, and its style is a conventional mixture of dialogue and description. The characterizations are clearly and sharply drawn. The novel abounds in verbal wit, comic gesture, and good natured satire. One of its most distinguished qualities is the pacing and power of key descriptive passages. Amis controls and builds excruciatingly comic tension in such descriptions as Welch attempting to pass a van on a curve with a bus veering down from the opposite direction or Jim awakening with a hangover to discover that his mouth still bears witness to his excesses.

A recurrent theme in criticism on Amis is that he continues a long tradition of wit, social satire, and picaresque heroism which began with the novels of Henry Fielding, and that he provides for contemporary readers satirical novels like those Evelyn Waugh produced during the middle decades of the twentieth century.



# Themes

## Job Security

Dixon dislikes Medieval History, but he took many classes in it at school because the classes were simple. When Dixon applied for a job at the University, he stressed this education because he thought it might help him get the job, but did not imagine that he would be assigned all the Medieval History classes upon acceptance of the job. Now Dixon is teaching a subject he dislikes, finding himself forced to write lectures and articles he finds tedious and boring, and presenting lectures that bore him more than his audience. Therefore, it is with some irony that Dixon finds himself attempting to anything he can to secure this job permanently, including spending long weekends with his professor, a man he finds to be pretentious, distracted, and unpleasant.

Dixon needs a job. Dixon feels that his job at the University is the less taxing of most of the jobs he qualifies for. It does not matter that Dixon dislikes the job, he needs it in order to support himself and to leave him free to pursue some of the other things in life he finds pleasurable. The job at the University offers some prestige, it is not difficult, and it offers job security once he survives the two-year probationary period. However, Dixon hates the job, the people he works with, and everything about being stuck in a small university town as opposed to London.

Dixon fights to save his job, doing all he can to make a good impression on his professor even though he finds himself making social gaffs at almost every opportunity. When invited to the professor's home for an arty weekend, Dixon attempts to fit in, but finds it nearly impossible when he becomes entangled in an argument with the professor's son. Later, Dixon becomes drunk and causes a fire that damages some bedclothes in the guest room where he sleeps. Dixon is helped the girlfriend of the professor's son, a woman he had at first thought was unfriendly but soon discovers a softer side of her personality. As Dixon becomes more and more attracted to this young woman, he finds his social gaffs increasing, threatening his chances of securing his job at the university. Finally, Dixon is let go when he ruins a lecture presentation. However, it all appears to work out for the better when Dixon is immediately offered a new position.

## Love

At the beginning of the novel, Dixon believes himself to be infatuated with a young female lecturer at his school. Margaret Peel, this young lecturer, is a dramatic young woman who attempted suicide when the young man she had been seeing left town with another young woman. Dixon remains at her side, attempting to help her through this troubled time. Before he really understands what has happened, Dixon finds himself tied romantically to this young woman.



At the same time, Dixon meets Christine Callaghan. Christine is the girlfriend of his professor's son, Bertrand. At first, Dixon finds this young woman to be unpleasant, picking a fight with him when he mistakes her for another woman. Later, however, Christine helps Dixon through a tough spot, making him believe that there might be more to her personality than he had first thought. Christine turns to Dixon when she needs help finding her boyfriend and they quickly become good friends. Soon, however, they find that there is some spark of romance between them, but they are both attached to other people. It seems like a hopeless situation.

Dixon becomes embattled with Bertrand over Christine, refusing to back down and allow Bertrand to continue to hurt Christine in his callous way. At the same time, Dixon discovers that Margaret is not the woman he had believed her to be and he feels safe in ending their relationship. However, Christine insists on choosing Bertrand because she is a loyal woman and because she resides in London, too far for her and Dixon to continue a relationship. When Christine learns that Bertrand has been carrying on with a married woman behind her back, she changes her mind about her oath to be loyal to her relationship and allows Dixon to convince her that there is something strong and important in their growing relationship.

## Revenge

Dixon dislikes Bertrand Welch the moment he meets him. Like his father, Professor Ned Welch, Bertrand is pretentious and unkind. Bertrand looks down his nose at Dixon, causing him to feel inferior and stupid. Dixon decides that he will declare war on Bertrand and will not rest until he is able to prove that Bertrand is the loser, not he. Dixon begins this battle almost accidentally when he learns that Bertrand is having an affair with a colleague's wife. Dixon holds on to this information, choosing not to act on it even when he falls in love with Bertrand's girlfriend. Instead, Dixon sets out to seduce Bertrand's girl. When Bertrand discovers Dixon's intentions, he picks a fight with him, but Dixon refuses to back down. Dixon wins this fight, leaving Bertrand humiliated and injured. Later, Dixon is offered a job that Bertrand had wanted as well as the girl.

Johns is a fellow lecturer at Dixon's university and also resides in the same boarding house where Dixon lives. Johns dislikes Dixon for reasons that even Dixon does not understand. Johns overhears Dixon arranging for a friend to call the Welch home and help him with an excuse to leave an arts weekend early and tells the Welch's about the call. The only motive Dixon can think of is that Dixon wrote on one of Johns' magazine. Later, Johns would again interfere in Dixon's business, causing Dixon to send him a letter that appears to be from the jealous boyfriend of a woman Johns' admires. Finally, Dixon takes some insurance policies from Johns' desk and burns them as a final act of revenge for Johns interfering in his business.



## Significant Topics

As in all good comedy, the theme of this book is the difference between appearance and truth, between illusion and reality. The theme plays itself out through the conventional concerns of romantic love. Jim is caught between the falsity of Margaret Peel and the freshness of Christine Callaghan. He is caught between one job, the future of which involves kowtowing to Welch until he becomes an historical fossil like his superior, and another job the prospect of which offers a supportive employer and interesting work. Amis projects Jim through a series of complications during the course of which the author critiques the stodginess of England's moribund social system. The obligatory happy ending is fulfilled when Jim ends up with the proper woman and the proper work.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is the third person omniscient point of view. The entire novel is seen through the eyes of James Dixon, the protagonist. Dixon is a young university lecturer in the history department of a small university after the Second World War. Dixon is unhappy in his job, but is fighting hard to keep the job because of the security it will mean for his future. Unfortunately, Dixon is a frequent victim of social faux pas that leave Dixon constantly attempting to cover up his mistakes.

The point of view of this novel works because it keeps the narration right in the middle of the plot, with Dixon. Dixon's frequent mistakes are full of humor, especially when he often makes these mistakes worse by attempting to cover them up. If the point of view were to shift from character to character, it would lose some of this humor as the reader begins to see the hurt these mistakes might cause other characters. Due to the fact that the plot is so reliant on Dixon's mistakes and the humor surrounding them, this tight narration aids in keeping the plot light and humorous, rather than adding any tension that might exist among the other characters.

## Setting

The novel is set in a small university town in the English countryside, within a train ride from London. Due to the presence of the university, many of the characters in the novel tend to be either intellectuals or support staff at the university. The novel takes place in three main settings, the university, the home of Professor Welch, and the boarding house where Dixon lives. These three settings differ from each other in several ways. The home of Professor Welch is often filled with intellectuals who embrace the arts, specifically music. The university is filled with lecturers and students seeking knowledge. The boarding house, however, is less formal, less stuffy, run by a woman who was once a servant at a large estate. Although several lecturers from the university live in the boarding house, the atmosphere at this home is much less cultured and stiff.

The setting of the novel is important to the plot because it sets up the social standard by which the characters live. The period in which the novel takes place, the years immediately following the Second World War, allows for the appearance in the plot several characters who served in the war and are now seeking to get an education based on the scholarships given to them by the government. This changes the character of the university as well as the lecturers instructing them. This time period also imposes specific attitudes on the characters and social standards by which they must behave. At the same time, the background of the university not only provides a source of tension for Dixon as he fights for his job there, but the intellectuals who surround, and bore, Dixon.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. The language includes many foreign phrases that are often explained in the text and some slang that might not be familiar to American readers although they appear to be common in England. Although simple, the language often includes some formal words and phrases, especially in the dialogue, that are appropriate to the education level of many of the characters. The novel is set in a university town where many of the characters are lecturers, therefore the language fits their education level and their expected interests.

The language of this novel works well because it fits the nature of the characters portrayed in the novel. Dixon often speaks in a simple language that is filled with slang, expressing his less than respectful view of academic life, while his professor and other characters express themselves in a more intellectual language that expresses their more appreciative view of academic life. This speech pattern not only reflects differing attitudes, but also differences in opinion as might be apparent in people of different generations. Dixon is of a younger generation, a young man who has fought for his country in the Second World War and is just beginning to find his place in society, while many of the other characters have been in academic life for many years and have settled into niches of their own making. It is for this reason that the language of this novel works well with the characters.

## Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-five chapters. Each chapter is fairly short, many not longer than five to ten pages in length. Most of the novel is told in a combination of exposition and dialogue, including long passages of internal dialogue during which Dixon often attempts to convince himself that his mistakes are not as bad as they appear or that his boredom with his job is something he might overcome someday.

Most of the novel follows the path of one main plot, with only a few subplots to support it. The main plot follows Dixon as he attempts to make nice to his professor in an attempt to survive his two-year probation. Dixon makes many mistakes during this time, like burning a hole in some bed sheets while staying the weekend at the professor's house. At the same time, Dixon meets the professor's son and instantly dislikes him. In one subplot, Dixon decides to declare war on this son and attempt to seduce his girlfriend away from him. In another subplot, Dixon is involved in a relationship with another lecturer, Margaret, only to find out that she was a mentally disturbed woman who thrives on drama.



## Quotes

"He paused, and his trunk grew rigid as he walked; it was as if some entirely different man, some impostor who couldn't copy his voice, had momentarily taken his place."

Chapter 1, pg. 7

"More than ever it was the moment to dart into the street and fail to return. But economic necessity and the call of pity were a strong combination; topped up by fear, as both were, they were invincible." Chapter 2, pg. 26

"It was from this very bottle that Welch had, the previous evening, poured Dixon the smallest drink he'd ever been seriously offered. Some of the writing on the label was in a Romance language, but not all. Just right: not too British, and not too foreign either."

Chapter 5, pg. 59

"Dixon was alive again. Consciousness was upon him before he could get out of the way; not for him the slow, gracious wandering from the halls of sleep, but a summary, forcible ejection." Chapter 6, pg. 61

"Avoiding Margaret's eye, he walked through the silence and out of the door. Apart from making him feel he might die or go mad at any moment, his hangover had vanished."

Chapter 7, pg. 80

"Bertrand must not be a good painter; he, Dixon, would not permit it. And yet here was the Gore-Itchbag fellow, not on the face of it a moron, listening to this frenzy of self-advertisement without overt protest, even with some attention." Chapter 10, pg. 112

"It occurred to him that she'd done this merely as a manoeuvre to arouse his desire, and arouse it for no purpose beyond that of somehow feeding her vanity. Then he rejected so familiar and contemptible a notion: she was too trustworthy for that, she'd just been tired. That was all." Chapter 14, pg. 146

"Dixon wanted to rush at her and tip her backwards in the chair, to make a deafening rude noise in her face, to push a bead up her nose." Chapter 16, pg. 156

"Welch went on talking, his own face the perfect audience for his talk, laughing at its own jokes, reflecting its puzzlement or earnestness, responding with tightened lips and narrowed eyes to its more important points." Chapter 18, pg. 178

"Breathing noisily, Welch snatched his foot off the clutch-pedal, and, in the kangaroo mode to which it must by now be accustomed, the car started on its journey." Chapter 18, pg. 189

"I've done it now, he managed to think. And without even telling them...He drew air into





his lungs; if he could push it out again he'd be all right, but he couldn't, and everything faded out in a great roar of wordless voices." Chapter 22, pg. 227

"The whinnying and clanging of Welch's self-starter began behind them, growing fainter and fainter as they walked on until it was altogether overlaid by the other noises of the town and by their own voices." Chapter 25, pg. 251

# Adaptations

The 1957 adaptation, which starred Ian Carmichael, Terry Thomas and Hugh Griffith, focused on Jim's hijinks and antics that inevitably lead to goofs.



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Dixon? Why does he want the job at the University? What marks the difference between Dixon's attitude and that of the other professors at the school? Why? Why does Dixon teach a subject he does not like? Why would he want to continue in this pursuit? What other job opportunities does Dixon have?

Who is Bertrand? Why does Dixon dislike him? Why is Bertrand so unpleasant to Dixon? Why does Bertrand look down on Dixon? What does Bertrand do for a living? Is he good at it? What job does Bertrand want? Who eventually gets the job? Why?

Who is Christine? Why is Christine unpleasant when she first meets Dixon? Why does she change her attitude? Why does Christine help Dixon with the burned sheets? Does she tell the Welch's about the sheets? Why or why not? Why is Christine attempting to help Bertrand with the job he wants? What is her relationship to the perspective employer? Is Bertrand using Christine? Why? Does she realize this?

Who is Margaret? Why does Margaret attempt to kill herself? Was this a serious attempt? Who finds her? Who should have found her? What was Margaret's motive? What does Dixon later learn about her motives? How does this revelation help Dixon feel comfortable in breaking off his relationship with Margaret? What was Dixon afraid of before?

Discuss Professor Welch. Why does Dixon dislike him? Why does Dixon later regret this opinion? Why does Dixon try so hard to please Welch even though he dislikes him? Who is Mrs. Welch? Why does Dixon spend much of the novel attempting to avoid her? What is Dixon afraid of? What does Dixon do when he is finally confronted by Mrs. Welch? What does this reaction say about Dixon's character?

Discuss Mr. Michie. Who is Mr. Michie? Why does Dixon dislike him? What does Mr. Michie represent about the setting of the novel? How is Mr. Michie different from the typical university student? Why does Dixon believe this type of student has lowered the quality of education? Is this true? Compare Dixon to Mr. Michie. How are the two alike? How are they different? Is Dixon aware of these similarities and differences? How does that awareness affect his attitude?

Discuss social class in this novel. How is social class represented in the novel? How does it affect Dixon's opinions and attitudes? Would Dixon want the job at the university if not for social class? Why or why not? In what other ways does social class affect the plot of the novel? Discuss each.

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